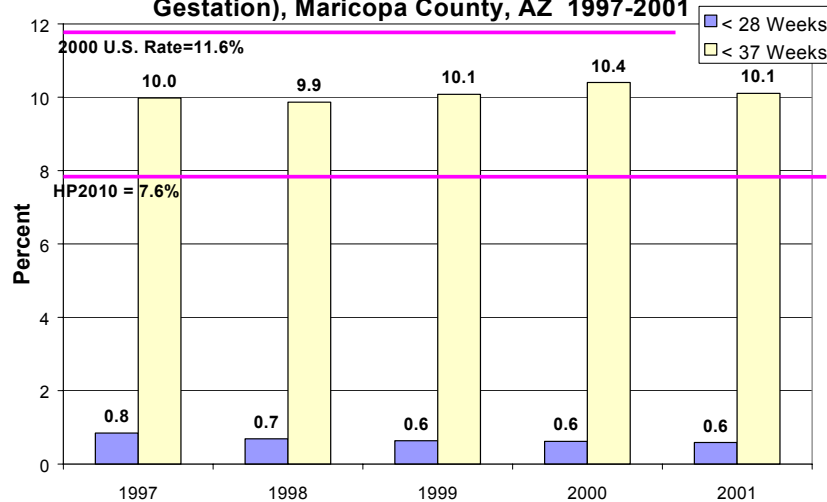


SECTION VI. PRETERM BIRTHS

Preterm birth (delivery before 37 weeks of pregnancy) is correlated with low birth weight and is a principal cause of infant morbidity and mortality. The percent of preterm births has not changed substantially in the last five years (see Figure 25). Approximately 10% of Maricopa County babies were born at less than 37 weeks gestation. The county did not reach the Healthy People 2010 preterm birth goal of less than 7.6% of births. Approximately 0.6% of births in 2001 had less than 28 weeks gestation.

The percentage of preterm births as a function of maternal age generally follows a J-shaped curve. During the years 1998-2001, there were higher rates of preterm births for younger age groups, lower rates for women in their twenties, and higher rates as women's age increased (see Figure 26).

Figure 25. Percent of Preterm Births (<37 Weeks Gestation), Maricopa County, AZ 1997-2001



The percent of preterm births for African Americans (14.3%) was higher than for other races/ethnicities (range of 9.7% to 10.1%) during the four-year period 1998 to 2001 (14.6% in 2001). See Summary of Birth Statistics table in Volume II for more data.

Figure 26. Percent of Preterm Births (< 37 Weeks Gestation) by Maternal Age Group, Maricopa County, AZ 1998-2001

